Students must make satisfactory progress towards the timely completion of their course and maintain a satisfactory academic standard to be allowed to continue their studies. (Statute 11.4)

At the close of semesters one and two each academic year, the Arts Student Centre (ASC) will identify students who are ‘at risk’ of not making satisfactory progress in their course and also those who have made unsatisfactory progress. The ASC initiate formal contact with each student in an effort to try and assist them turn poor performance back into good. The work of the CUPC is a vital part of this process. The following information is provided to assist members to understand the reasons behind the work, the types of documentation they will encounter, potential outcomes of the CUPC meeting and what to expect in terms of student behaviour during meetings.

Relevant University Legislation:

Statute 11.4 – Unsatisfactory Progress

Academic Performance Policy (MPF 1024)

Academic Progress Review Procedure (MPF1025)

Which students are invited to meet with the CUPC?

The Academic Progress Review Procedure defines categories of academic progress. Students who have been identified as ‘at risk’ of making unsatisfactory progress are invited to make an appointment with an adviser from the Arts Student Centre. The role of the adviser, in these cases, is to assist the student to articulate why they have failed and to refer them to appropriate support services in an attempt to improve their academic performance in their next period of study. The adviser will assist the student with appropriate enrolment changes for the coming semester. The procedure also instructs us to invite any graduate or honours student who fails any subject to meet with the committee. There are several categories of unsatisfactory progress for undergraduate students that would result in them being invited to the CUPC, but in general it is a result of poor performance over two consecutive semesters or failing a subject a second time.

Each student invited to meet with the CUPC will be sent an official hard copy letter inviting them to make an appointment. This correspondence is also sent to their student email account. In addition, they will be sent a copy of their student record card (a document we generate from ISIS showing their entire enrolment record, all academic results and all official comments recorded in the student system), a Student Union Advocacy Service brochure explaining the CUPC process and a form that allows them to articulate in writing for the committee any of the issues that have affected them and led to the poor performance. If the student completes and returns this form it will be available for committee members to read prior to the student attending.

Who is on the Committee and what actually happens during the meeting?

The Committee is made up of a Chair (usually the Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning) or the Director of the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences), two senior academic staff from the Schools within the Faculty of Arts, and a senior staff member of the Arts Student Centre acting as Secretary. The secretary will provide all relevant paperwork and brief the members before each case. The secretary will record the minutes and decisions for each
student case that is decided. Not all students make appointments and those that don’t will have their cases decided in their absence.

Students are allowed to bring a support person with them into the room. This could be a friend, partner, relative or a volunteer member of the Student Union Advocacy Service. The support person is not allowed to address the committee but can speak if asked a direct question. Their role here is to support the student through the process.

The Chair will nearly always begin by thanking the student for attending and for supplying any paperwork. The other committee members are introduced and the Chair generally then invites the student to explain in their own words what happened in the last semester. The Committee members are then able to ask questions of the student in an attempt to determine the student’s capacity to successfully complete the course. Every attempt is made to afford the student an opportunity to state what they think may help them turn their performance around. There is an expectation that the student should be able to articulate why things have gone wrong, and what active steps they will take to change.

Depending on the level of interaction and engagement the student shows, the meetings generally last around 10 – 15 minutes. Each meeting is scheduled for a maximum of 20 minutes. At the end of the meeting, the Chair will thank the student for their participation and explain that a decision will be sent to them within 3 working days. The secretary generally escorts the student from the room and reminds them to keep their eye on their student email account for further correspondence. The Committee now determines an individual outcome for each student.

What decisions/outcomes does the CUPC provide?

The Academic Progress review Procedure states that:

- A CUPC must terminate a student’s enrolment if they form the view that a student is unlikely to be able to make satisfactory course progress,
- A CUPC must terminate a student’s enrolment if they form the view that a student who has exceeded the maximum course duration is unlikely to be able to complete the course within the next year,
- A CUPC will only permit students who have exceeded the maximum course duration to continue for one further year before their progress in the course is reviewed again,
- If a CUPC forms the view that a student has the capacity to continue with their enrolment successfully in the subsequent teaching period, they must impose whatever conditions and/or make whatever recommendations they deem appropriate to assist the student to overcome or adjust to the circumstances that have led to poor performance.

Examples of the types of conditions/recommendations that may be placed on a student’s enrolment include:

- limiting a student to enrolling in a specific number of subjects/credit points,
- requiring a student to enrol in a specific subject,
- requiring a student to only enrol in subjects at a particular level,
- requiring a student to cease the pursuit of a particular major,
- recommending a student commence or continue with counselling,
- requiring or recommending a student make an appointment with a student adviser,
- requiring/recommending a student take a leave of absence.

Each case will be different, depending on the student’s past results, their written submission and the things they may say during a hearing.
In exceptional circumstances, the Committee may provide a student with late withdrawals from failed subjects and sometimes allow a student to complete additional assessment for subjects failed in the previous semester.

There are a range of support services that are often recommend to students. Academic Skills and Wellbeing Services are the most commonly referred services. Information about these services is available on the web at [http://services.unimelb.edu.au/](http://services.unimelb.edu.au/)

**What types of behaviours do students display during the meeting?**

Attending a CUPC meeting can be a stressful experience for a student. Students will be unsure of what to expect and many will be fearful that they are about to be terminated from their course. With this in mind it can be hard to predict how individual students will behave during the meeting. It is often the case that poor academic performance is a direct result of extenuating personal circumstances in the student’s life. Talking about these things in front of a group of strangers is difficult and one of the most common reactions from students is to cry. The committee members should acknowledge the student’s situation but attempt to direct the conversation back to how the student will attempt to improve their academic performance. If a student is unable to stop crying or becomes increasingly distressed it is generally best to end the meeting. (This is a very rare occurrence).

Students may deal with the stress of the meeting in a range of other ways including being disinterested, laughing, making rude comments or being aggressive. These reactions are often a result of nervousness and the heightened emotional state that can be brought on by the meeting itself. They can often be a defence mechanism used because the student is embarrassed or ashamed of the situation they find themselves in. In such cases it is often necessary to remind the student that the committee process is designed to assist the student to change behaviours that have lead to poor academic performance.

The Academic Performance Review Procedure provides the following information:

A CUPC will not:

- comment on a student’s personal circumstances outside of the context of their unsatisfactory progress
- attempt to counsel a student on any matters other than their unsatisfactory progress
- make assumptions about a student’s motivation for study either at University generally or within a specific course or discipline.

**Other things for the Committee to consider?**

It can feel at times that the committee is being asked to make decisions that will have far reaching and, in some cases, life altering effects for the student concerned. It is important to know that students must meet with the committee at least twice, and be warned at least once about possible future termination from their course, before termination can occur. So, for any student meeting with the committee for the first time, termination will not be the outcome they receive. The University also has a range of support services that students can engage with and these services (whether academic or personal) provide assistance that can help them return to good standing. Sometimes, however, termination is the most appropriate outcome. Students who find themselves in this situation are given information about academic rehabilitation options and how they might recommence the course should such rehabilitation be demonstrated.

At the end of each meeting some time is reserved to enable members to debrief and discuss situations or circumstances that may have been upsetting. Everyone is encouraged to make use of this time.